
Between circularity and bioeconomy: what the transition's agenda is doing to the socio-economic models of waste

Résumé

Since the turn of the 2010s, both the OECD and the European Commission (OECD, 2009; Geoghegan-Quinn, 2012) put the circular economy and, more recently, the bioeconomy at the heart of the transitions agenda (Dron, 2013; Sanz-Hernández et al., 2019). The circular economy now appears as a normative horizon for change, both a rationale for public policy and renewed regulation, and an imperative for critical innovation to meet today's economic, social and environmental challenges. While the circular economy and the bioeconomy open up prospects for balancing economic and environmental constraints, economic and political actors have different visions and associated imaginaries that collide (Friedrich et al., 2022). The link between the bioeconomy and the circular economy (Carrez and Van Leeuwen, 2015), widely recognized by the European Commission should ensure the environmental sustainability of the former (Stegmann et al., 2020).

The literature mainly focuses on categorizing models according to their innovation systems and business models (de Oliveira et al., 2019; Pieroni et al., 2019), their capacity to be alternative (Friant et al., 2020; Johansson and Henriksson, 2020; Ziegler et al., 2023), or their specific territorial features (Barles, 2010; Bahers and Kim, 2018; Bassi et al., 2021). Such research undoubtedly helps to document the diversity of the circular economy. However, the social and power asymmetrical relations (Feola, 2020), the equity issues (Ashton et al., 2022; Mathai et al., 2021) but also the confrontations and arrangements between players (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) – which we see as crucial dimensions of emerging socio-economic models – remain under-researched.

Thus, the aim of this special session is to offer a multidisciplinary contribution to the analysis of what the 'transition' agenda is doing to socio-economic models(1). Our goal is to study the concrete changes at work beyond the storytelling of a transition towards the circular economy and the bioeconomy, hypothesizing that this process is leading to a diversity of interrelated models. By focusing on this diversity of emerging models, but also the confrontations and arrangements between stakeholders, this special session aims at achieving a better understanding of the process of institutionalization of such socio-economic models, on the long run.

Our special session deals with two main research questions that have not yet been explicitly addressed in the extensive literature on the circular economy and the bioeconomy:

1- Do the different models of the bioeconomy and circular economy overlap or collide, and how?

2- Does the development and institutionalization of the circular economy and the bioeconomy paradoxically contribute to the market extension of the linear economy into areas

that were previously non-market?

Proposals from different disciplines (e.g. economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, law, geography, etc.) based on various theoretical and/or empirical approaches are expected. Proposals may address issues related to the transformation and recovery of different types of biomass, agricultural waste, household waste, bio-waste, building and public works waste, etc., in urban and rural areas. Comparative and international analyses will be appreciated.

Paper proposal format: 1 page + bibliography

Proposals should be sent to: clarisse.cazals@inrae.fr and sylvain.le-berre@inrae.fr

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(1) We define a socio-economic model as a social configuration of the economy, resulting from transactional practices between players in a context of asymmetrical power relations.

Mots-Clés: Waste policy, Circular economy, Bioeconomy, Confrontation, Arrangements, Territorialization, Transition